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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1239th MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

5 September 2019

**In response to the report by the Head of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo,
Mr. Jan Braathu**

Mr. Chairperson,

We thank the distinguished Ambassador Jan Braathu for his detailed report on the situation in the Serbian Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija and the activities of the field presence.

The situation in the region is cause for increasing alarm. High levels of unemployment, social deprivation and the large-scale involvement of the population in drug trafficking, in the arms trade and in terrorist and extremist organizations remain the norm for Kosovo. The observations of the OSCE Mission in Kosovo testify to a rise in ethnically motivated crimes, namely an increase of 27 per cent compared to the second half of 2018. In an overwhelming majority of cases, local Serbs are the victims. The latest egregious incident to date occurred on 2 September in Kosovska Mitrovica, where a group of Albanians attacked and stabbed a young Serb.

The Kosovo Albanian leadership continues to be torn apart by inter-clan strife. Since Kosovo's so-called independence, none of the "governments" has served the full term of its mandate. The inglorious fate of early resignation also befell the cabinet of the "pistol coalition" led by former field commanders of the Kosovo Liberation Army. It is unlikely that the "parliamentary" election scheduled for 6 October will help to bring more responsible figures to power.

It is becoming increasingly clear that the quasi-State entity in Kosovo has failed. It is no coincidence that the number of countries that have withdrawn their recognition of its so-called independence is growing.

The provisional authorities in Priština are demonstrating chronic powerlessness and, even more frequently, a blatant unwillingness to solve what are acute problems for the territory's inhabitants. In order to serve their political ambitions, local politicians have gambled on encouraging radicalization among Kosovo Albanians, mainly by deliberately exacerbating the Kosovo crisis.

Examples of provocative action are well known. Since November 2018, the authorities in Priština have been imposing an illegal 100 per cent tariff on goods from Central Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina. In December 2018, it was decided to transform the Kosovo Security Force into a fully fledged "army" in

violation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1244. On 16 May this year, Kosovo's "parliament" approved a resolution on the "Serb genocide", which merely serves to foment hatred between the two peoples. On 28 May, under false pretexts, Kosovo Albanian special forces carried out another act of intimidation against Serbs in northern Kosovo. Mikhail Krasnoshchekov, a Russian staff member of the UN Mission in Kosovo who enjoyed diplomatic immunity and was on an official assignment, was beaten up and detained.

We are talking not only about anti-Serb actions to spite the Serbian Government's aspirations for compromise with the authorities in Priština, but also about a demonstrative disregard for international law. The Kosovo Albanian leaders have reached the point where they are openly defying the principal sponsors of Kosovo's "statehood", including the Government of the United States of America.

The reason for the aggressive policy being pursued by the authorities in Priština is obvious for all to see, namely Western patrons' support, which has been taken to the extreme, for any actions on the part of the Kosovo Albanian authorities. They are convinced that they can get away with anything. How can it be otherwise when the international Kosovo Force, which has the necessary UN Security Council mandate to ensure peace and security in the territory, condones the excesses of the Kosovo Albanian special forces in the north of the territory, when in response to the provocations by the authorities in Priština the European Union and the United States merely limit themselves to toothless general appeals "to both sides" for restraint? It is quite evident that, with the West's blind patronage of the Kosovo authorities, any attempts to create a multi-ethnic and tolerant society in Kosovo and Metohija are pretty much doomed to fail.

We should like to thank the OSCE Mission's team, which in a most difficult environment will have to continue its systematic efforts to introduce legislative guarantees for the rights of the non-Albanian population, to facilitate inter-ethnic dialogue at the municipal level and to promote contact among young people. The practical assistance of the OSCE Mission in supporting the rights of displaced persons and protecting Serbian Orthodox Church sites cannot be overestimated.

At the same time, the OSCE's efforts could have a far greater and immediate result if they were backed up by a stricter policy on the part of Kosovo's Western allies towards their charges. It is necessary to strive for the establishment of the Community of Serb Municipalities in Kosovo as the main element of the first agreement on the principles for normalizing relations between Serbia and Kosovo, which was signed on 19 April 2013 in Brussels. There is a need for concrete results in the work of the special court established in The Hague in 2017 under the auspices of the European Union to investigate the crimes of the Kosovo Liberation Army. All those involved in the atrocities revealed by the Council of Europe rapporteur, Mr. Dick Marty, back in 2010 must be brought to justice and receive the punishment they deserve, regardless of the positions they hold now.

Kosovo's current problems are systemic in nature. They are the result of a series of unilateral decisions by the West, culminating in the barbaric reprisals against the former Yugoslavia by NATO forces in 1999. After two decades, it may be said that the West's cavalier interference, on the side of Kosovo Albanian separatists, in the internal affairs of an independent State only served to intensify the Kosovo problem, leading the situation into an impasse. Furthermore, as a result of these actions, trust within the Euro-Atlantic region has been undermined for many years and the post-war system of European security has been irreparably damaged.

Demands are now being made of the Serbian Government to expedite the "final normalization" of relations with the authorities in Priština, linking it to an artificial timetable. Support for European integration is in effect being offered in exchange for recognition of Kosovo's so-called independence. One can only marvel at the blithe cynicism of such "peacekeepers".

We do not doubt that we shall also hear today from those who want to whisk Kosovo's representatives on to the OSCE "podium". We shall repeat for their benefit that Kosovo Albanians may participate in OSCE events only as part of the Serbian delegation. Anything else would grossly contravene the provisions of UN Security Council resolution 1244.

The history of the Kosovo settlement teaches us that the tactic of imposing unilateral concessions cannot produce results. The Kosovo problem can be solved only through the achievement by the Serbian Government and the authorities in Priština of a viable and mutually acceptable compromise on the basis of UN Security Council resolution 1244. Our common task is to facilitate that dialogue.

Finally, we should like to wish Ambassador Braathu and the entire Mission team continued success in their difficult but very important work.

Thank you for your attention.